

California (Mr. HUNTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2755.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES FROM PAYING SUBSISTENCE CHARGES WHILE HOSPITALIZED

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2998) to amend title 10, United States Code, to exempt certain members of the Armed Forces from the requirement to pay subsistence charges while hospitalized, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2998

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES FROM REQUIREMENT TO PAY SUBSISTENCE CHARGES WHILE HOSPITALIZED.

Subsection (c) of section 1075 of title 10, United States Code (as added by section 8146(a)(2) of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2004 (Public Law 108-87)), is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2998, the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. MCHUGH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, we are here today through the attention, diligence, and concern of a single individual, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG). The very effective and very dedicated chairman of the Committee on Appropriations has brought this, I think, very not just unnecessary but distasteful provision in our laws to our attention, and we are here today under the gentleman's leadership to reverse that.

This is a great example of what we do not know can hurt us, a provision that I do not believe that many Members were aware even existed; but again through the gentleman's attention and

devotion, we are about to resolve and correct it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2998, a bill introduced by the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. YOUNG, to exempt service members receiving medical treatment in military hospitals for combat wounds from being charged for the cost of their meals while hospitalized.

I would like to commend the gentleman from Florida for bringing this bill to the attention of the House. I think it is important that my colleagues understand the personal side of this story because it is so characteristic of Chairman YOUNG.

The need for this legislation became apparent to the Chairman during a visit that he and his lovely wife Beverly made to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital to provide comfort and support to the personnel wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families. While visiting with one of the wounded, he was made aware of a legal requirement for hospitalized service members to repay their basic allowance for subsistence to compensate the government for the meals they received.

What Chairman YOUNG immediately recognized was that the authors of the law requiring this payment did not contemplate that service members wounded in combat would be subjected to the same requirement right along with the member who had received routine treatment. He understood that America would not want its combat wounded to be confronted with a food bill when they departed the hospital.

It is the Chairman's nature to look after the welfare of our fighting men and women and to correct injustice when he encounters it. In looking out for the troops, he was also looking out for each member of this House. He knew that the right thing to do was to ensure that those wounded in combat or combat-like activities must not be bothered with a bill for their meals. For that, all the members of the House owe the Chairman a debt of gratitude.

The Chairman first took out his check book and personally paid the bill for the service member who had brought this issue to his attention. He then took action to include a provision in the Defense Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2004 to ensure that an immediate fix was put into place. I am proud to say that today we will follow Chairman YOUNG's leadership and make that temporary fix a permanent change to the law.

Again, I commend Chairman YOUNG for this bill and thank him for his diligence in protecting the interests of our service members.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on H.R. 2998.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the author and the motivator behind this very worthy piece of legislation.

(Mr. YOUNG of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I appreciate the gentleman for bringing this very important bill to the floor, especially under suspension of the rules.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) is a very dedicated supporter of our military and is an important

member of the Committee on Armed Services. And as chairman of the subcommittee, he does an important job. I know of no one who is more committed to the members of our military than the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER).

What we are talking about today has to do with soldiers wounded on the battlefield in a military hospital recovering from those wounds who are charged \$8.10 a day for the food they consume while they are in the hospital recovering from wounds received on the battlefield. When I learned about that, I have to tell Members, I could not believe it. So I did a little research, and my research told me this is true. This is the case; this is in the law.

I spoke to the administrators and commanders of the military hospitals at Walter Reed Army Hospital, at the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, at the Hospital at Landstuhl, Germany, and they all said, yes, we have to do this, it is in the law, but it is more trouble than it is worth. They said they are actually embarrassed when they have to hand a soldier, when he left their hospital a bill for the food that he or she consumed while in that hospital recovering from wounds received on the battlefield. That is not right. That is outrageous.

So I introduced H.R. 2998 to repeal that law. Actually, while we were moving the defense appropriations bill, I was able to include that bill in the defense appropriations bill which was signed into law on September 30.

□ 1415

So immediately the problem was fixed but was only fixed for a year because appropriations bills only last for a year. So I asked the gentleman from California (Chairman HUNTER) and the gentleman from New York (Chairman MCHUGH) if they would report this bill to the floor so that we could have a vote on it. I asked for a vote because so many of our colleagues, when they learned of this, were just as outraged as I was, and they asked that we have a vote. So we will ask for a vote on this bill because so many of our Members want to vote for this bill. Nearly 300 of our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, have cosponsored this legislation.

This is something that really needs to be fixed. It was fixed for 1 year, but this fix makes it permanent. This repealed the law permanently, and we will not be embarrassed again by handing a soldier who is leaving in a wheelchair with both legs amputated or an arm amputated or vision totally destroyed or handicapped for life and we are not going to insult them by asking them to pay \$8.10 a day for the food that they consumed while in that military hospital.

I thank the gentleman very much for bringing this very important bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2998, legislation I introduced to permanently

repeal an outrageous law that requires our combat wounded military to pay for their food while hospitalized recovering from their wounds.

I want to thank my friend and colleague, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Mr. HUNTER, and the Chairman of the Total Force Subcommittee, Mr. MCHUGH, and all the members of the Committee for their support of my legislation and their willingness to expedite its consideration by the House. There are no greater friends to our troops in the field than Chairmen HUNTER and McHugh and the members of their Committees.

This is a law that has been on the books since 1958 for hospitalized officers and since 1981 for enlisted personnel. I only learned about it late this summer from my wife Beverly, who spends considerable time visiting with injured soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, and Coast Guardsmen at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. A family member of a Marine reservist who had to have a part of his foot amputated brought it to her attention.

This law is a serious affront to those injured in battle. Upon being discharged from the hospital, our enlisted personnel and officers are actually served with a bill to pay for their "subsistence" while in the hospital. The current daily rate for these charges is \$8.10. For those who pass through more than one hospital on their way to recovery, they are served with multiple bills.

We learned about this from our visits with Staff Sergeant William L. Murwin, who spent 26 days in the hospital recovering from injuries incurred in Iraq. Sergeant Murwin is a reservist in the Marine Corps who was injured when a 10-year-old Iraqi dropped a grenade in the HUMVEE he was driving. As a result of the explosion, Sergeant Murwin is a partial amputee, having lost a large part of his foot.

Upon his discharge July 18th to return home to Nevada and his job as a sheriff's deputy, Sergeant Murwin was handed a bill from the hospital for \$210.60 to pay for his food and subsistence. Beverly and I paid this bill for Sergeant Murwin because we consider it an injustice to ask those who have served us so courageously in Afghanistan and Iraq to pay for their food while hospitalized.

Legislation I introduced on September 4th, and which is cosponsored by 256 of my colleagues, amends current law to prohibit service members injured in combat or training from being billed for the food while hospitalized. It has been endorsed by a wide range of veterans service organizations including The Air Force Sergeants Association, AMVETS, the Association of the United States Army, The Enlisted Association of the National Guard, The Fleet Reserve Association, The Military Officers Association of America, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, The Naval Reserve Association, and The Reserve Officers Association of the United States, among others.

Upon learning about these hospital charges, I researched the issue and found that Congress initiated the system of charging for subsistence costs for officers who were hospitalized in 1958 under Public Law 85-861. The 97th Congress amended this law in 1981 with Public Law 97-22 to include enlisted service members. Although I can find no one who claims responsibility for this legislation, I have found in the five weeks since introducing my

legislation overwhelming support for its immediate repeal.

To end this injustice to our injured troops, I included my legislation in the conference report on the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill, which the House and Senate approved last month and President Bush signed into law on September 30th. Being that it was included in an appropriations bill, that provision only extends through Fiscal Year 2004. The legislation we consider today will make the repeal permanent.

Mr. Speaker, this is a long overdue correction to our statutes. No one wants to see these men and women have to write a check for their hospital stay, least of all the staff of our Nation's military hospitals. I have personally talked with the senior staff at our major military hospitals both here and in Germany and they all support this legislation and say that not only is the collection of these checks an insult to our troops but it is more of an administrative burden than it is worth.

We all agree that we should be honoring and thanking those in uniform for their service to the cause of peace and freedom, not billing them for their food. And we should be doing all we can to help them recover from their injuries, not ask them to write a check to the U.S. Government upon their discharge from the hospital to begin their period of convalescence.

It is my hope that my colleagues in the House will join in supporting this legislation today as a fitting tribute to all those who serve so valiantly and unfortunately have returned home injured, missing limbs, and in many cases being permanently disabled. It is the least we can do for our Nation's keepers of peace and defenders of freedom.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Total Force Subcommittee, who is always a gentleman and very cooperative.

I have a prepared statement that I will enter in its entirety into the RECORD, but I wanted everyone for the record to know and to reflect on the reality, and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) is far too modest and far too much of a gentleman to point it out. He said it came to his attention. It did come to his attention.

What he did not mention, and I am not surprised that he did not mention, is that this gentleman, I think in part because he is a Member of Congress but I know mostly because he is such a deep, concerned and caring individual, in tandem with his lovely wife, Beverly, who is also deeply concerned and has headed up a program that is concerned about our veterans and about our men and women in uniform, have for years now paid visits to those brave men and women who have been wounded in service to this country. In fact, I learned about some of the wounded from the 10th Mountain Division, a division that I proudly represent from northern New York, who were in treatment at Walter Reed from the gentleman from Florida's (Chairman YOUNG) visitation there.

For years he and his wife have quietly gone there, giving aid and comfort to individuals just to let them know that others care. And how it came to his attention is that, number one, in visiting with one of these young heroes, he heard about their being wounded and then heard about the bill that this young hero was presented with.

What he also did not happen to mention either was the fact that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) was so offended and outraged, as well he might have been, that he and his wife wrote a check out of their personal funds for several hundred dollars to pay for that young man's bill for the food that he received while he was trying to recover from what was a partial amputation from his battlefield wounds.

This is a reflection of this man, who all of us have the honor and opportunity to serve with him understand so clearly is a caring, concerned individual and the kind of individual, as his partner is as well, Beverly, whom we are proud to call a colleague and honored and deeply appreciative of the fact that we can call him friend.

So this was not just something that came in a letter. It was not just something on a chance visit that he happened to hear about. This was a continuing pilgrimage by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) and his wife, Beverly, to visit our wounded as they have done repeatedly year in and year out, not for pride or glory, not to put out press releases, but because they care. I think it is important for the record to show that, what an honorable man this individual is and how he and his wife brought this incredibly wrong provision to our attention.

I again thank the gentleman from Arkansas for that opportunity for me to say at this moment those comments in respect and admiration of the sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I, too, salute the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) for his work on this bill.

I was recently, several weeks ago, out at Bethesda Hospital visiting some of our wounded there but also some young Marines who got malaria while they were in Sierra Leone. I worked in Sierra Leone in the past myself as a doctor years ago and have an interest in malaria. I ran into the gentleman from Florida's (Chairman YOUNG) wife out there during her good work in the halls of Bethesda Hospital, so I know he and she are both very much in touch with our men and women in the military who end up in the hospital.

I think the point has been well made that what may look good on paper in terms of accounting, that if we have military people getting a subsistent amount of money each month to help cover room and board and if they are in a place where they are getting free

room and board, then let us do a deduction because they are getting that free room and board for that time where they are in a government facility. It makes no sense, though, in terms of public policy, when that facility is a hospital; and we all know that when we have someone in a hospital. We all know that when we have someone in a hospital, the family incurs additional expenses from phone calls and travel and transportation and running to the pharmacy to pick up shampoo that they forgot and all those kinds of things; and for these folks in the future that we are going to prevent this from happening to, they do not need that kind of hassle.

So I applaud the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) for bringing this bill forward today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER) for yielding me this time.

I rise today also to express my deepest gratitude to our military personnel, but I am frustrated by the way our government and our country treats our military personnel, as was pointed out by the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) and the extraordinary work that he and his wife have done, and I want to thank him and commend him for the great bill that he has here on the House floor.

No factory worker or teacher is required to pay for any part of the recovery should they be injured on the job. However, if a serviceman is injured while defending our country in combat, in service to our country, they are forced to pay a part of their hospital stay, as reflected in the gentleman from Florida's (Chairman YOUNG) bill, and this should be corrected immediately. I am glad to see broad bipartisan support for this legislation, and I hope that our House passes this as quickly as possible.

I also want to bring one more, I think, concern to the attention of the people and our Congress, and that is what I introduced, House Resolution 387, a bipartisan House resolution to support our military personnel by covering their travel costs to return our troops home to their families and loved ones. People who have been in Afghanistan and Iraq and who have 2 weeks R&R, rest and recuperation, to visit with their families and loved ones are brought to the ports, to the borders of our country, and then from there, Mr. Speaker, they are forced, if they want to go on home, to pay their own way. I think this should be corrected, and we have 98 co-sponsors on this House resolution which would aim to correct this.

Our current policy leaves troops stranded or forced to pay their way for connecting flights, and I think we can and should correct this. Our government should pay all travel and transportation costs, and we should honor our troops who defend and protect us by seeing this is done.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to a gentleman from the great State of Nevada (Mr. PORTER), who has the opportunity to represent the hero that I mentioned that the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) and his wife encountered, a brave young man now struggling with his recovery.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding me this time, and I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG) for introducing this legislation.

Staff Sergeant Murwin, whose plight inspired the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) to introduce this bill, is a fellow Nevanadan and wounded combat veteran. His courage in serving his country and looking out for the interests of his fellow combat wounded veterans is commendable. I must say it is absolutely shameful that Sergeant Murwin and soldiers like him were forced to pay for the privilege of trying to recover while their lives were in turmoil or in a hospital.

A few months ago, I joined with other Members of Congress as we visited Walter Reed Army Hospital and Bethesda Naval Hospital and had a chance to see firsthand the honor, the pride, and the pain of our fellow men and women in uniform. These men and women had limbs missing. One gentleman was run over by a tank. But, also, one young man had a flag attached to his lapel, a tattered small American flag that he wore to remember his fellow soldiers that were still at war.

Mr. Speaker, these men and women have given enough in the name of freedom and democracy. It is shameful that they were forced to pay on top of all that they had given of their lives. I am glad today that we have righted something that was very, very wrong.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA).

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in strong support of the legislation. To charge these veterans for meals I think is quite absurd; and I want to congratulate the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOUNG), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations for bringing this product forward. But I have to point out to my colleagues that we are not finishing the job today with this bill, and I would hope the chairman would help us in bringing to the floor before we adjourn another piece of legislation to correct an inequity. That is, when we bring our Iraqi veterans home for leave, we dump them in Baltimore.

I was flying out of National Airport about a week ago, and two veterans were there waiting for a plane. So I went to talk to them, and one was a regular Army personnel and the other was an Air Guard personnel, and I questioned them. I said, "Are you flying home on leave?"

They said, "Yes."

I said, "Did they fly you into National and you are taking your connection flight?"

They said, "No, we took a bus up from Baltimore so, on our own dime, we could fly home for a short period of time to be reunited with the families."

I think if we have billions of dollars to rebuild Iraq, to provide for zip codes there and garbage trucks and uniforms for their army, I think we can have the American taxpayers send these young men and women back home to the loving arms of their families in their hometowns, not in Baltimore.

So, hopefully, we can have that product come before us before we adjourn and make sure these folks are flown right home so they can spend their time with their families and not waiting for buses and other airplanes on their own dime.

Mr. SNYDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I once again want to thank the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) for their work on this bill. I look forward to seeing this become a permanent portion of the law and deal with this problem once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Once again, let me thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. SNYDER), my partner on the Total Force Subcommittee, for his leadership and assistance but most of all again the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG) for his leadership, his insight, and his continuing concern.

This is something that we need to fix; and, fortunately, because of the efforts of the gentleman from Florida (Chairman YOUNG), we have the opportunity to do it today. I certainly urge all of our colleagues to join us in supporting this very worthy measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2998, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR EXPANSION OF SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill